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T H E
BANKRUPT.

A
COMEDY,
IN
THREE ACTS.

By SAMUEL FOOTE, Esq.

L O N D O N :

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, No. 46, near Serjeants-inn,
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BANKRUPT.



THESE ACTS

SAMUEL JOHNSON, Esq.

LONDON:

Printed by G. Kearsley, No. 45, near St. James's Church, Strand; and T. Evans, near the New Exchange, in the Strand.

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Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Sir Robert Riscounter,	Mr. Foote.
Sir James Biddulph,	Mr. Aickin.
Pillage, — —	Mr. Palmer.
Resource, — —	Mr. Fearon.
Margin, — —	Mr. Baddely.
Robin, — —	Mr. Whitefield.
Phelim O'Flam, — —	Mr. Bannister.
James, — —	Mr. R. Palmer.
Sir Thomas Tradewell,	Mr. Davis.
Dingey, — —	Mr. Griffiths.
Pepper, — —	Mr. Stephens.
Plaister, — —	Mr. Jones.
Rumour, — —	Mr. Lloyd.
Clerk, — —	Mr. Walters.

W O M E N.

Lady Riscounter,	Miss Sherry.
Lydia, — —	Mrs. Jewell.
Lucy, — —	Miss Ambrose.
Kitty, — —	Miss Platt.

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P R O L O G U E.

Spoken by Mr. FOOTE.

FOR wit's keen satire, and this laughing stage,
 What theme so fruitful as a Bankrupt Age?
 For not confin'd to commerce is the curse,
 The head is near as empty as the purse;
 Equally sunk, our credit and our wit,
 Nor is the sage more solvent than the cit;
 All these—but soft, ere thus abroad we roam,
 Were it not prudent first to look at home?
 You, gentle Sirs, have giv'n me credit long,
 And took my word for many an idle song;
 But if exhausted, I give notes to-day,—
 For wit and humour, which I cannot pay,
 I must turn Bankrupt too, and hop away.
 Unless indeed, I modestly apply,
 For leave to sell my works by lottery.
 Tho' few will favour, where's no cash to see'em,
 Poor hopes, that way to part with my Museum:
 My old friend, Smirk, indeed, may lend his aid,
 And sell by auction all my stock in trade;
 His placid features, and imploring eye,
 May tempt perhaps the tardy town to buy;
 His winning manner, and his soft address,
 To other sales of mine have giv'n success;
 But after all, my ever honour'd friends,
 On you alone my fate this night depends;
 I've fought some battles, gain'd some vict'rys here,
 And little thought a culprit to appear
 Before this house; but if resolv'd you go
 To find me guilty, or to make me so,
 To grant me neither wit, nor taste, nor sense,
 Vain were my plea, and useless my defence.
 But still, I will not steal, I will not beg,
 Tho' I've a passport in this wooden leg.
 But to my cot contentedly retire,
 And stew my cabbage by my only fire;
 Mean time, great Sirs, my sentence yet unknown,
 E'en as your Justice be your candor shewn,
 And when you touch my honour, don't forget your own.

T H E
BANKRUPT.

A C T I.

Enter ROBIN and KITTY, *meeting.*

ROBIN.

THIS letter and casket, with my master's most respectful compliments, you will, Kitty, with your own fair hands, deliver to Miss.

KITTY.

The Casket is heavy—I suppose, Mr. Robin, this is what my Lady calls the Purryfunalia?

ROBIN.

A small tribute, Madam, to adorn the bride on the happy occasion.

B KITTY.

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KITTY.

What then, I suppose you look upon this marriage as good as concluded.

ROBIN.

Things are gone such a length, that not the least doubt can be made.

KITTY.

And yet between the cup and the lip,—you remember the proverb?

ROBIN.

One of the parties may die to be sure, otherwise I don't know how—

KITTY.

No?

ROBIN.

No: The young lady has not alter'd her mind?

KITTY.

Not to my knowledge.

ROBIN.

What, Sir Robert Riscounter, her father? these curmudgeonly cits regard no ties, no obligations when they have an higher interest in view. I suppose he has received larger proposals from some other party.

KITTY.

I have heard no such thing.

ROBIN.

Well then, I am sure no impediment can arise from our quarter. My master, Sir James Bid-
dolph,

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dulph, is too much a man of honour : besides, I know his whole soul is wrapt up in Miss Lydia.

KITTY.

He has given her pretty convincing proofs of his passion.

ROBIN.

What, I suppose the malicious mother-in-law, who, I know, hates Miss, and has a damn'd deal of art, in conjunction with Miss Lucy, that precious pledge of her former husband's affections, has contrived to throw some confounded rub in the way.

KITTY.

Bless me, Mr. Robin, I don't know what you mean, I am sure I said nothing at all.

ROBIN.

No?

KITTY.

No. But only that things which are not done, may perhaps never be done ; there is nothing certain but death.

ROBIN.

Very moral, Miss Kitty,—(there is some mystery, if I could but get at it, but this slut is as cunning—I will have a trial, however) nay, for the matter of that, I can have, Mrs. Kitty, no interest at all in this match : there is so much confinement, and form, even in the most fashionable families, that a single service is best suited to me, especially too, that now I am got into most of the clubs : there is one circumstance I

B 2

shall

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shall most feelingly regret: That I own, will greatly touch me.

K I T T Y.

And pray, what may that be, Mr. Robin?

R O B I N.

Not living under the same roof with Miss Kitty. I made no doubt, Madam, but your fortunes would follow your mistress's, and, in that case, I thought to soften the rigours of my captivity, in your agreeable converse.

K I T T Y.

Really, Mr. Robin? Well, I protest, I did not.

R O B I N.

And when our mutual endeavours had procured for us a small independence, I flatter'd myself with gently sliding the down-hill of life, subject to no other will but Miss Kitty's.

K I T T Y.

What a difference between him, and the servants of this side the bar?—Really, Mr. Robin, you talk nearly as well as your master.

R O B I N.

And no wonder, Madam, since love, the same deity, inspires us both.

K I T T Y.

How quick you are in your rippartees, Mr. Robin? are you good at a riddle?

R O B I N.

If you mean the making them, no; it is too low a species of writing for me; for novels I have

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have now and then some dealings with Noble, and have by me a genteel comedy of one act, that is thought to have a good deal of merit.

K I T T Y.

And Pray when does it make its appearance?

R O B I N.

Why, faith, I don't know, all the managers are such scribblers, that they won't give a genius fair play, but engross the whole stage to themselves.

K I T T Y.

Very selfish, indeed. Well, Mr. Robin, though you won't make a riddle, I will, which, as my Lady expects me, you may study to expound by yourself. This match won't take place, and yet are none of the parties to blame; I may live in the same house with you, though I should leave my young Mistress's service, and the loss of my place may perhaps be the making of my fortune. So Adieu.

R O B I N.

Nay, but Miss Kitty, one word, if you please.

K I T T Y.

Not a syllable, go, and puzzle your brains. But take this, for your comfort, that if you cannot at present make out my meaning, a little time will fully explain it. [Exit.]

R O B I N.

So skittish and shy, Mrs. Pert! but if our next meeting don't bring forth this secret, you are no true chambermaid, nor I fit for a valet de chambre. All reserve amongst servants is flat treason

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treason against the community. Every well-disciplin'd domestic is bound in honour, however careful of his own, to reveal all family secrets, to the rest of the tribe. But I must brush off, for here comes my Lady. *[Exit.]*

Enter Lady RISCOUNTER, and JAMES.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And he has promised that the paragraph shall appear in the paper this morning?

JAMES.

I am afraid, Madam, there is no doubt of his keeping his word.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Afraid! what a pusillanimous creature art thou?

JAMES.

As your Ladyship, by what means I know not, is acquainted with my veneration for Miss, you can't wonder at my feeling some compunction, in becoming an instrument to ruin her fame.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Why the fellow is a fool: don't you consider, that her ruin, as you call it, will be your rise?

JAMES.

Perhaps so, Madam, but how can I—

Lady RISCOUNTER.

You love Lydia, you say?

JAMES.

More than I have words to express.

Lady

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Lady RISCOUNTER.

And Sir James Biddulph you detest, as a successful rival, no doubt?

JAMES.

Except on that account, I have no reason.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And what better reason can any man have? don't you know, that the two great master passions that give birth to all that we do, is hatred and love?

JAMES.

Without doubt.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

The mind would stagnate without them; and are not you particularly fortunate, in being able, by one masterly stroke, to gratify both?

JAMES.

Were I indeed sure of succeeding with Miss?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

You have every probable chance in your favour: in the first place, it is impossible, consistently with his honour, that Sir James Biddulph can pursue his designs upon Lydia.

JAMES.

May be not.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Nor will any proper suitable person think of her when her reputation is gone.

JAMES.

Too true, I believe.

LADY

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Lady RISCOUNTER.

Then, who so likely to succeed as yourself? as you are the party suspected, common policy will point out you for her husband.

JAMES.

But will Miss Lydia be brought to submit?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

She can have no choice but her father's. Him, I can easily manage, and possibly, as a *douceur*, prevail on him to augment the very considerable fortune she derives from her aunt; never fear, things are in a very good way.

JAMES.

I must submit all to your ladyship's management.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Your part will be easy enough, you will have nothing to do but be passive.

Enter KITTY, and LUCY, with a newspaper in her hand

LUCY.

Here, Madam, here it is, and placed in a most conspicuous part of the paper.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And no alteration?

LUCY.

Not a word. In the exact form that we sent it.

Lady

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Lady RISCOUNTER.

Pr'ythee read it, my dear.

LUCY.

[*Reads.*] “ We can assure the publick, from
“ the very best authority, that the beautiful
“ daughter, by a former venture, of an emi-
“ nent banker, not far from the Monument,
“ was surpris'd by the servants, in a most criti-
“ tical situation, with Mr. J——s, clerk to her
“ father.”

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Right, right.

LUCY.

“ And what heightens her crime, she was on
“ the eve of being married to an amiable young
“ baronet, at the west end of the town, the ap-
“ parent object of her own choice.”

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Finely circumstantial, it is impossible for any
body to err in the person.

LUCY.

Not in nature ; now, I think, we shall pull
down Miss Prudery's pride.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

It cannot fail. Kitty, you have carefully pe-
rused the instructions I gave you.

KITTY.

Please your ladyship, I have them by heart.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Don't be too forward in replying to any ques-
tion they put to you ; but answer with a kind of

C

reluctant

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reluctant hesitation, as if the facts were forc'd from your mouth.

KITTY.

Never fear, Madam.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Don't forget to make frequent professions of the great love and affection you bear your young mistress, that you could not have thought it, shan't know whom to trust for the future; ready to lay down your life for your lady.

LUCY.

Suggest too, that some strange arts must have been used, or you are convinc'd she could never have been brought to submit.

KITTY.

I shall carefully, Madam, obey your directions.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And squeeze out a tear now and then, if you can.

LUCY.

Or, if they won't come, rub your eyes till they are red.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Right; this will give probability to all that you say.

LUCY.

Otherwise, the young hypocrite's behaviour has been always so specious, those who know her won't credit the story.

KITTY.

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KITTY.

Suppose, Madam, Sir James Biddulph, or any body else, should make any enquiry.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Answer none of their questions; your tenderness for Lydia will be a proper excuse; to your master's authority, indeed, you are obliged to submit. You comprehend me?

KITTY.

Perfectly, Madam.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Within, I will give you further instructions; and remember, Kitty, your fortune is at stake: Success, in this one instance, will make you easy for life.

KITTY.

The best I can do will be but a poor return for your ladyship's goodness.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Send the news-paper in to your master. [*Exit Kitty.*] You have, James, seen none of our people this morning.

JAMES.

I have not enter'd the shop.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Then get out of the way as fast as you can; secrete yourself somewhere, that will give additional strength to the story. Your withdrawing will argue a consciousness arising from guilt.

C 2

JAMES.

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JAMES.

That I most sufficiently feel.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Success will soon drown the remembrance.
[Exit James.] That fellow must not appear;
his mind is so maukish, that, should he be confronted with Lydia, he would betray our whole plot in an instant.

LUCY.

It is a wonder, Madam, how have you got all this address: instead of a private family, you are form'd to govern a country.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Why, I think, I may without vanity say, that I deriv'd from nature some talents for this kind of intrigue; but to the care of my education I chiefly owe what I am.

LUCY.

Indeed, Madam!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

My father was a stock-broker, you know, and your father, my first husband, an attorney, my dear.

LUCY.

True, Madam.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And as they had no reserve, they kept no secrets from me, I must have been a blockhead, indeed, not to have made some progress in their professional arts.

LUCY.

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LUCY.

True, Madam.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

But after defeating Sir James Biddulph's designs upon Lydia, to turn the tide of his affections, and substitute you in her room, will, Lucy, be the great political effort.

LUCY.

From your ladyship's great abilities there cannot be the least doubt of success: besides, her father is so hasty and violent that, I am sure, he will never be brought to forgive her.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

There is no relying on that; no mortal was ever so mutable. Our various climate is not so inconstant as he. Sir Robert is choleric enough, but then, as he is provoked without cause, he is appeased without reason; one word will inflame, another extinguish the fire; whom one minute he persecutes, the next he protects. His joy, grief, love, hatred, are in eternal rotation, and I have been often tempted to think his mind a machine, moved only by the immediate objects before it.

LUCY.

And yet, Madam, how compleatly you rule him!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

No longer, child, than I stay by his side; after that, the first person has him that sees him, and all my impressions are effac'd in an instant.

Enter

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Enter KITTY.

KITTY.

My master has got at the paragraph.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Has he so? well, and—

KITTY.

He enquired, Madam, for you, and putting his finger here, bid me shew this directly to your ladyship.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

He did not suspect then that I had seen it before?

KITTY.

Not in the least—but here he comes, tottering and trembling—with his face as white as a sheet.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Get you behind.

Enter Sir ROBERT RISCOUNTER.

Sir ROBERT.

Well, my dear, have you read——

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Sir Robert, I have.

Sir ROBERT.

Have you so? Well, and pray what do you think? Did you ever see such an audacious, abominable, impudent, scandalous piece of scurrility? Zounds, give me my cane, I will go directly to the rascally printer's, and——

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Lady RISCOUNTER.

But suppose, Sir Robert, the printer should not be passive, and, in return for the strokes of your cane, should leave the marks of his nails in your face.

Sir ROBERT.

There may be something in that, as your ladyship says, I have heard some of the rogues are strong and sturdy enough.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And, first, let us be sure who the party is the paragraph points at.

Sir ROBERT.

Hey! what d'ye say? points at? why, it is as clear as the sun—*[takes the paper]*—banker—Monument—first venture—zounds, they might as well have published my name, and my daughter's, at length.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Why, to say truth, the marks are pretty strong; but still let us coolly consider the case. Kitty, go down; Lucy, my dear, leave Sir Robert and me together a little.

[Exit Lucy and Kitty.]

Sir ROBERT.

Ay, go, child, pr'ythee go. I don't believe, Lady Riscouter, that there is a single man in the Ward, who would have the least hesitation in pronouncing who was—

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Well, but don't let us be in such hurry to make the application ourselves; the malice of others will

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will be ready enough to do that: let me see, is there no other banker lives near the Monument?

Sir ROBERT.

Not that I know; but suppose there should, here, the west end of the town, and the amiable baronet, puts the matter out of dispute: hey, what d'ye say?—

Lady RISCOUNTER.

That, indeed; but, hold a little, does not it mention the name of the paramour? Ay, here it is, J—S.

Sir ROBERT.

J—s.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

J—s, I don't recollect any body that visits here, whose name those letters will suit.

Sir ROBERT.

There is no Jones, nor Joddrell—poo, pox, that is an L—nor Jennings, nor Jarvis, nor Jenkins, nor——

Lady RISCOONTER.

Not that I recollect.

Sir ROBERT.

There is Jacobs the Jew, but he is as old as one of the patriarchs, with his beard down to his breeches; they can never mean him.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Poo! that is too absurd to suppose: but stay, are there no other distinguishing marks? um, um——“J—s, clerk of her father's,” I own that passage escaped me.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

Hey! what did you say? and me too, one of my clerks! who can that be? J—s, the two letters belonging to a surname.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

So I should imagine.

Sir ROBERT.

Zounds! it can never be James.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

James!

Sir ROBERT.

An impudent, eternal, damn'd son of a bitch! this is the consequence of taking beggars into your bosom.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

But, Sir Robert——

Sir ROBERT.

Don't mention it, Madam; was not he the thirteenth son of a starv'd curate in Essex, ragged as their colts, and knew about as much as one of their calves—did not I feed, cloath, take him into my house, treat him as if he had been——and, in return, the villain to dishonour my child!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

You are too impatient, Sir Robert; why should you fix all at once upon James? I have observed the lad's behaviour to be discreet and modest; nay, indeed, rather shy and reserv'd.

Sir ROBERT.

That is true enough, I must own. I never
D remark'd

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remark'd the boy to be presumptuous and forward, like some of our pert prigs of the city, but, as your ladyship observes, rather bashful and shy. No, no, it can never be him.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Not but I have known people with that specious outside appearance, carry minds as malignant and daring——

Sir ROBERT.

The cursedest fly dogs upon earth : hypocrisy is the finest veil for a villain. I always suspected there was something bad behind his solemn sanctified look : I don't believe the scoundrel ever swore an oath since he came into the house. There is a villain for you, my dear.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Nay, but my dear, let us conclude nothing rashly. Suppose you send for James up, and sift him a little ?

Sir ROBERT.

That mayn't be amiss—who's there ?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Not that I believe he will be ever brought to confess.

Sir ROBERT.

He ! no, no, curse him. Him ! you will never catch him at that : you might as well hope to extract sugar from salt. I may as well let him alone.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Let us see him however.

Enter

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Enter a Servant.

Sir ROBERT.

True. Let James know that I want him; but don't tell the fellow I am angry, and so get him to skulk out of the way.

SERVANT.

I did not know that your worship was angry, 'till you told me your——

Sir ROBERT.

I tell you! my dear, did I say any such thing? you prying, impertinent——Go, and do as you are bid. *[Exit Servant.]*

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I don't think it unlikely, Sir Robert, but some idle acquaintance, without considering the consequences, may have inserted this malicious article, by way of pleasantry, as a kind of jest upon James.

Sir ROBERT.

Nothing so probable, Lady Riscounter: this town swarms with such forward, frivolous puppies.

Enter Servant.

Well, where is James?

SERVANT.

Sir, he is not within.

Sir ROBERT.

What, is the rascal run off?

D 2

Lady

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Lady RISCOUNTER.

No, my dear, perhaps only gone out with some bills for acceptance.

Sir ROBERT.

Like enough. When will he be back?

SERVANT.

The rest of the clerks have not seen him to-day.

Sir ROBERT.

Not seen him to-day? what, are all of them blind then?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Nay, Sir Robert, perhaps he has not been in the shop.

SERVANT.

So they say.

[Exit.

Sir ROBERT.

Then they could not see him, indeed. Not in the shop! nay, then the business is clear; guilt, guilt, flight is full as bad as confession.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

It does look suspicious, I own; but then nothing ill can happen without your daughter's concurrence, and you have not the least doubt of her.

Sir ROBERT.

Doubt! hey!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And, in fact, have nothing to fear.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

Fear! doubt! I hope your Ladyship has no more doubts than myself.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Why should I? how does this affair concern me?

Sir ROBERT.

As it concerns me, Lady Riscounter; do you suppose I should have been indifferent, if such a charge had fallen on Lucy?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Such a charge can never fall upon my daughter Lucy.

Sir ROBERT.

Full as soon as on my daughter Lydia.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I am not, Sir Robert, so certain of that.

Sir ROBERT.

Lady Riscounter, you begin to alarm me; you know more of this matter, than you are willing to own.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Whatever I know, Sir Robert, I am resolved not to communicate.

Sir ROBERT.

And why not?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Whatever a mother-in-law says, the good-natured world always imputes to malice.

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

Generally the case, I must own. But to me you may, nay, you ought to reveal.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Since you are so earnest, I own some rumours have reach'd me.

Sir ROBERT.

Of what kind?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

You will pardon me there: if you will examine your daughter's maid, Kitty; she, I am told, can satisfy all your enquiries.

Sir ROBERT.

An artful baggage, I know. For heaven's sake, my dear, send her hither directly.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

But not the least mention of me. [*Exit.*]

Sir ROBERT.

Very well. I never observ'd the least correspondence between Lydia and James; but what of that? they would take good care, I warrant, to conceal it from me.

Enter KITTY.

So, I find you were the go-between, the little infamous agent in this curs'd——

KITTY

Sir Robert—

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

You must have been a volunteer; I am sure, James was not able to bribe you, for he is as poor as a pillag'd black in Bengal.

KITTY.

Really, Sir, I don't understand you.

Sir ROBERT.

You mean, hussy, you won't: Come, you may as well tell me all the particulars concerning Lydia and James; with the main article, you see I am already acquainted.

KITTY.

Don't press me, pray Sir; I would rather die than say any thing to hurt my young mistress. [*cries,*

Sir ROBERT.

Nay, pr'ythee, Kitty, don't cry, you are a good girl, and love my daughter, I see.

KITTY.

And not without reason, for she has been the kindest, best—

Sir ROBERT.

Nay, till now, she was ever an amiable girl; but here, child, you will do her a capital service.

KITTY.

Indeed, Sir.

Sir ROBERT.

For if her affections are fix'd upon James, tho' I may lament, I shall not oppose him.

KITTY.

Since that is the case, I can't say, but early one morning, hearing a noise in Miss Lydia's apartment, I stepp'd down to see what was the matter.

Sir ROBERT,

Well?

KITTY.

Just as I got to the foot of the stairs, her door open'd, and out came Mr. James.

Sir ROBERT.

Did he? and why did not you alarm the house and seize the villain directly?

KITTY.

That, Sir, would have ruined my Lady's reputation at once.

Sir ROBERT.

True enough, you did wisely. Did the fellow perceive you?

KITTY.

Yes, Sir, and made me a sign to be silent.

Sir ROBERT.

I don't doubt it.

KITTY.

Indeed, he came to me two hours after, told me he had a passion for Miss, never could get an opportunity of disclosing his mind, and desperate, at finding his hopes on the point of being ruin'd, he had stolen that morning into her chamber, humbly to implore her compassion and pity.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

He chose a fine time and place for the purpose.

KITTY.

On his knees he desired, I would not disclose to any mortal what I had seen.

Sir ROBERT.

Which you should not have done.

KITTY.

He was too late in his caution; not five minutes before I had told it to Mrs. Hemshot, Miss Lucy's maid.

Sir ROBERT.

No wonder then the story is public.

KITTY.

I am certain sure, my young Mistress is innocent, for Mr. James vowed and declar'd he was all upon honour.

Sir ROBERT.

The malice of mankind will never be brought to believe it; you may go. [*Exit Kitty.*] So the girl's reputation is gone, and a retreat from the world the only choice that is left her: all my calamities are come upon me at once; my child ruin'd, and from the general distress, my own fame and fortune on the brink of destruction: the attorney and broker will be instantly here to contrive means for propping my tottering credit: Am I in a condition to think of expedients, or to listen to—

E

Enter

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Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A card, Sir.

[*Exit.*

Sir ROBERT.

Reads.] “ Sir James Biddulph’s compliments
“ to Sir Robert Riscouter, and if convenient
“ will take the liberty to wait on him this morn-
“ ing.” Prepar’d, as I expected, our misfor-
tunes have reach’d him, and he comes to break
off the match; he is not to be blam’d. This
rash, inconsiderate—I’ll to her, and if she has the
least atom of feeling, I’ll—And yet, how could
the poor girl help his intrusion? she might be
ignorant, and yet the fellow without encourage-
ment, would never have dared to—Yet the
impudence of some men is amazing, and so in-
deed is the folly of women: the original fault
must be his. But her after-compliance makes
her equally guilty, for had she disapprov’d, she
would have reveal’d the fact to her mother or me.
That, that, condemns her at once; I will to her
directly, and find out the full extent of her guilt.

[*Exit.*

End of the FIRST ACT.

ACT

A C T II.

Miss LUCY and Miss LYDIA discovered.

LUCY.

TO us, indeed, who are encumber'd with fathers and mothers, marriage is a convenient business enough.

LYDIA.

And why on that account, my dear Lucy?

LUCY.

As it makes one the entire mistress of one's time, and one is accountable to no mortal for what one says or does.

LYDIA.

What Lucy, not to your husband?

LUCY.

Nay, don't be prudish, my dear: you are going back to the days of Queen Bess; who talks now of obedience and duty? ridiculous! her majesty's old fardingale is not more out of fashion.

LYDIA.

No!

LUCY.

No: one reads in books, indeed, of nuptial ties and conjugal love; mere obsolete stuff! modern marriages are mere matters of interest.

LYDIA.

Interest!

E 2

LUCY.

LUCY.

Ay, child; for instance now, Sir Thomas Perkins, our neighbour, finding that Miss Williams has a good parcel of land, which being contiguous to his estate, will be very proper for him to possess; immediately sends his rent-roll a-courting to her's. The parchments are produc'd on both sides, and no impediments, that is incumbrance appearing, a couple of lawyers marry the manors together.

LYDIA.

Without the last regard to the persons.

LUCY.

Poo, persons! they are consider'd, child, as mansion-houses upon the estates, which one lives in, or neglects, just as they happen to be convenient, or not.

LYDIA.

But suppose Lucy, as in mine, there should happen to be no land in the case.

LUCY.

Then, child, the bargain is alter'd: you deposit so much money, and he grants you such an annuity; a mere Smithfield bargain, that is all.

LYDIA.

A pretty picture you give me of marriage. But this is all raillery, Lucy; I am sure you would never submit to this barter and sale.

LUCY.

I should do like the rest of the world. We must take things as we find them. You are not
I so

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so foolish as to be fond of Sir James Biddulph, my dear.

LYDIA.

Fond? the expression is strong; you must imagine I prefer him to the rest of——

LUCY.

Why, as to his appearance, it must be own'd, that the mansion is a pretty modern structure enough, well built, and prettily finish'd: I can't indeed say his upper story is furnished quite to my taste.

LYDIA.

Nay, Lucy, now you are unjust, the whole world concur in giving him sense.

LUCY.

Nay, that article is not very material. If I had him, that is a part of his house, with which I should hold very little communication, my dear. But however, you love him.

LYDIA.

Or I am sure I never would have him.

LUCY.

And, I suppose, if any accident was to break off this match, it would make you very unhappy.

LYDIA.

Can you doubt it, my dear?

LUCY.

There is one evil that attends these ridiculous contracts.

LYDIA.

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LYDIA.

You don't look upon love then as an essential ingredient?

LUCY.

Ha! ha! ha! silly and singular; do you know, Lydia, why Love is always painted as blind?

LYDIA.

There are many causes assigned by the poets.

LUCY.

But not one has given the true one: because the little rogue shuts our eyes to our interests.

LYDIA.

Fye, Lucy, where could you get these narrow and libertine notions?

LUCY.

A little more experience will tell you. But here comes Sir Robert, not a word of what has pass'd.

LYDIA.

I shall, my dear Lucy, for your sake, endeavour to forget all you have said.

Enter Sir ROBERT RISCOUNTER.

Sir ROBERT.

Lucy, you may go down. [*Exit Lucy.*] After what has pass'd, you will not be surpriz'd that I insist upon your immediately quitting my house!

LYDIA.

LYDIA.

Quitting the house, Sir!

Sir ROBERT.

Your fortune is independant and large; you will no doubt be happy in escaping from the observing eye of a father.—I will be cool, and desire only an answer to a very few questions. Since the death of your mother (who is happy in having escap'd the knowledge of this infamous business) have I been ever wanting in any act of paternal affection?

LYDIA.

For Heaven's sake, Sir, what can be the meaning of—

Sir ROBERT.

Come, no evasions, but answer briefly, yes, or no, to my questions.

LYDIA.

No, Sir.

Sir ROBERT.

After my first care to educate you fit for the world, has it not been my principal study to settle you properly in it?

LYDIA:

Most assuredly, Sir.

Sir ROBERT.

And knowing to what temptations girls at your age are expos'd, did I not seek out a man of rank, honour, and fortune, to be your protector, and guardian for life?

LYDIA.

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LYDIA.

I confess it.

Sir ROBERT.

Did you ever express the least dislike to Sir James Biddulph's address?

LYDIA.

Never.

Sir ROBERT.

How could you then so far forget what you owe to me, and yourself, as privately to harbour and encourage a passion—

LYDIA.

I am confounded.

Sir ROBERT.

For an object too unsuitable in every respect : for a mere creature of charity?

LYDIA.

Charity!

Sir ROBERT.

Ay, for it was compassion to the father's numerous family that induced me to take James into my house.

LYDIA.

James! what of him? or what relation, Sir, can he have to me?

Sir ROBERT.

This is astonishing in a girl of her years. What then, you know nothing of this fellow's affections?

LYDIA.

LYDIA.

For me?

Sir ROBERT.

Ay, for you. No billet-doux, no private meetings, no stealing into your chamber before the servants were out of their beds.

LYDIA.

Amazing! and who, Sir, has dared to insinuate—

Sir ROBERT.

Insinuate! why the tale is the talk of the town: all the morning papers are full on't.

LYDIA.

What can, Sir, be the meaning of this? is it possible you can think, Sir, your daughter so abandoned, so lost—

Sir ROBERT.

Hey!

LYDIA.

Recollect, dear Sir, I beseech you, have I in the whole course of my life, ever once dared to deceive you?

Sir ROBERT.

Why, Child, I can't say that you have. But in this case, there is such positive proof.

F

LYDIA.

LYDIA.

Of what kind, I beseech you?

Sir ROBERT.

Facts, facts, well attested; so don't pretend to deny.

LYDIA.

Attested! by whom?

Sir ROBERT.

Their names are needless at present. But what motive or interest could any one have to invent, or propagate.

LYDIA.

None, that I can discover; but, however strong the appearance, if either in thought, word, or deed, there has any thing, either criminal or culpable, passed between me and——

Sir ROBERT.

What, no declarations? no interviews?

LYDIA.

No more than with any other man in your service.

Sir ROBERT.

Astonishing!

LYDIA.

If the contrary can be made to appear, abandon me, Sir, at once to that world, already so prepossess'd to my prejudice, the greatest misfortune that can ever befall me.

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

Well, Child, rise; I can't help giving credit to what you aver. But how to persuade the rest of—

Enter A SERVANT

Somebody wants me? as I expected. Sir James Biddulph I reckon,

SERVANT.

No, Sir, a couple of gentlemen, who say they came by appointment.

Sir ROBERT.

I guess who they are. Another bad business. Shew them into the parlour. [*Exit Servant.*] You don't know half your father's afflictions—go, child, go into your chamber.

LYDIA.

I hope my father believes me.

Sir ROBERT.

I do, I do. As soon as I have dispatch'd these gentlemen, I will see you again. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE.

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SCENE, *A Parlour.*

Enter PILLAGE *and* RESOURCE.

PILLAGE.

Ay, take my word for it, Mr. Resource, in the whole round of the law, and, thank Heaven, the dominions are pretty extensive, there is not a nicer road to hit than the region of Bankrupts.

RESOURCE.

I should have thought it a turnpike, for you see how easily even a country Attorney can find it.

PILLAGE.

Pshaw, what amongst manufacturers, and meagre mechanicks? fellows not worth powder and shot; and yet these paltry Provincials, master Resource, are often obliged to solicit my aid.

RESOURCE.

Indeed!

PILLAGE.

Why, t'other day, a poor dog, over head and ears, in debt from the country, was recommended to me, by a client: the fellow had scrap'd together all he could get, and came up to town, with a view of running beyond sea, but I stopp'd him directly.

RESOURCE.

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RESOURCE.

Really!

PILLAGE.

O, ay, in a couple of months wash'd him as white as a sheep that is just shorn.

RESOURCE.

How did you bring it about?

PILLAGE.

Easy enough. Made him take a house in Cheapside, call'd him a citizen, in the London Gazette, and his name of John Madge, (being as common as carrots) not a soul in the country suspected that it was he.

RESOURCE.

How should they?

PILLAGE.

Pass'd a few necessary notes to get him number and value, white-wash'd him, and sent him home to his wife.

RESOURCE.

Cleanly and cleverly done.

PILLAGE.

When the country chaps brought in their bills, he drew out of his pocket a certificate, and gave them a receipt in full for all their demands,

RESOURCE.

How the loobies must look,

PILLAGE.

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PILLAGE.

Chop-fallen, no doubt: but he is in business again,

RESOURCE.

He is?

PILLAGE.

O yes, and I hear does very well. For I left him two hundred out of the six he brought with him, to begin the world with credit afresh,

RESOURCE.

Very generous indeed, Mr. Pillage,

PILLAGE.

O! a trifling affair, got little by it!—for the matter of that, a mere statute is not much in itself.

RESOURCE.

Ay! Well I thought it brought pretty perquisites with it.

PILLAGE.

No, no; it is a good hot-bed indeed to raise chancery suits in.

RESOURCE.

Ay, that is a produce that deserves propagation.

PILLAGE.

What, I see you have found a remedy for master Monk of the Minorities? I thought his was an incurable case.

RESOURCE.

RESOURCE.

Only skinn'd o'er the fore, master Pillage, it will soon break out again.

PILLAGE.

What were the means that you used?

RESOURCE.

Got some friends of mine to advance him cash on a project.

PILLAGE.

Of what kind?

RESOURCE.

A scheme of his, to monopolize sprats and potatoes.

PILLAGE.

And it took?

RESOURCE.

Oh! there was no danger of that. The people of this country are always ready to bite at a bubble.

PILLAGE.

Will it hold?

RESOURCE.

Pshaw! We shall break before the season for sprats, and as to the Potatoes, we had laid in a ship load or two.

PILLAGE.

For which you procured a good price?

RESOURCE.

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RESOURCE.

Not a fouse. They are all now in our cellars in Southwark, and have shot out branches as tall as the trees in the Park.

PILLAGE.

Ha! ha! ha! but apropos, can you guess Sir Robert's business with us?

RESOURCE.

Very near, I believe.

PILLAGE.

What, the house is not a tumbling?

RESOURCE.

A pretty large crack.

PILLAGE.

Which he wants our assistance to plaister. Why, I thought the knight was as firm as a rock.

RESOURCE.

I knew better things. I saw the mansion was daily decaying. Hush, here he comes.

Enter Sir ROBERT, followed by a Clerk.

Sir ROBERT.

As we have effects in our hands, accept the bills to be sure. But how to discharge them when they are due.—So, gentlemen, I have sent for you to beg your assistance.

PILLAGE.

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PILLAGE.

Sir Robert, we shall be very happy to serve you, if you will tell us but how.

Sir ROBERT.

Why, to deal plainly, gentlemen, my affairs are come to a crisis, and without some substantial and speedy assistance, my credit will quickly expire.

PILLAGE.

You surprize me : I never guess'd it in danger. Pray, Sir Robert, what brought on the disease, was it an alley fever, or a gradual decay ?

Sir ROBERT.

A complication of causes. Not but I could have weather'd them all, had the house in Holland but stood, their failure must be followed by mine.

PILLAGE.

What, Van Swieten's ?

Sir ROBERT.

Have you heard any thing of him to-day ?

PILLAGE.

No doubt, I believe, of their stopping ; their bills were offer'd at Garraway's under forty per cent. As your name is not blown upon yet, suppose you coin a couple of quires ! don't you think the circulation might serve you ?

Sir ROBERT.

No, that mint is exhausted, and private paper return'd to its primitive value. My real case
G can

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can be no longer conceal'd. I must stop, and should be glad of your advice how to manage the matter.

PILLAGE.

There are two methods in use. The choice will depend on how your affairs stand with the world.

Sir ROBERT.

Bitter bad, Mr. Pillage.

PILLAGE.

I guess'd as much, by your sending for us. They treat us, Master Resource, like a couple of quacks, never apply but in desperate cases.

RESOURCE.

But in all diseases there are different degrees.

PILLAGE.

True; for instance, if you find you are pretty near on a par, with perhaps a small balance per contra, summon your creditors, lay your conditions fully before them, convince them you have a fund to answer all their demands, and crave a respite for three or four years.

Sir ROBERT.

Just to call in my debts, and make the most of my other effects?

RESOURCE.

True; as the English merchants have a good deal of milk in their blood, that is a favour rarely refused.

Sir ROBERT.

This, Master Pillage, will be only deferring the evil.

PILLAGE.

That is, Sir Robert, as you manage the cards. Don't you see that the length of time, with the want or wish of ready money for trade, will dispose the bulk of your creditors to sell their debts at a loss of thirty or forty per cent?

Sir ROBERT.

True.

RESOURCE.

No contemptible sum, when a man's dealings are large.

Sir ROBERT.

But how shall I profit by—

PILLAGE.

What hinders you from privately buying the debts?

Sir ROBERT.

That, indeed—

RESOURCE.

A fine fortune sav'd out of the fire.

PILLAGE.

True. And now we talk of the fire, for a present supply, you may burn a warehouse or two, after it has been gutted of all its contents.

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RESOURCE.

And recover the full amount of the policy.

PILLAGE.

Did you never try that ?

RESOURCE.

No, I don't think he has done any thing in the fire way yet ; have you, Sir Robert ?

Sir ROBERT.

Never once came into my head.

PILLAGE.

May be not ; oh ! for a fertile brain, there are many means to be used ; but what d'ye say to my plan ?

Sir ROBERT.

What, the summoning scheme ? I am so involved, that I am afraid that project will never prevail.

PILLAGE.

Then you have nothing left but a statute.

Sir ROBERT.

But if my certificate should not be granted ?

PILLAGE.

That is my proper business, Sir Robert. If we find your creditors inclined to be crusty, there will be no difficulty in creating demands to get number and value.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

That will swell my debts to a monstrous amount.

RESOURCE.

So much the more for your honour; consider you are a knight, and your dignity demands you should fail for a capital sum.

Sir ROBERT.

Does it?

PILLAGE.

To be sure. Why, you would not sneak into the Gazette like a Birmingham button-maker.

RESOURCE.

Oh fie!

PILLAGE.

He would never after be able to shew his head upon Change.

RESOURCE.

Never, never.

PILLAGE.

And then, you know, what with the portable stuff, such as jewels, or cash, that he himself may secrete, and the dividends that fall to the share of his friends, which they will doubtless restore—

RESOURCE.

He will be fit to begin the world again with *eclat*.

PIL-

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PILLAGE.

In a much better condition than ever.

RESOURCE.

And his children's children will have reason to thank him.

Sir ROBERT.

But is there not some danger in concealing the portable stuff, as you call it?

PILLAGE.

Not in the least. Besides, to colour the business, you may collect a purse of light guineas, with an old batter'd family watch, and deliver them to the commissioners, on your first examination.

RESOURCE.

That will give an air of integrity.

Sir ROBERT.

You seem to think, then, Gentlemen, that it is the duty of every honest merchant to break once at least in his life, for the good of his family?

RESOURCE.

Not the least question of that.

PILLAGE.

Every day's practice confirms it. Well, Sir Robert, when shall I provide you the tackle?

Sir ROBERT.

The tackle!

PIL-

PILLAGE.

In about a month or six weeks, I think, you may be made fit to appear in the papers.

Sir ROBERT.

In the Gazette, as a bankrupt?

RESOURCE.

Aye, but then no time must be lost.

PILLAGE.

Not a moment, for should they smoke his design—

Sir ROBERT.

Gentlemen, I must decline your assistance.

PILLAGE.

How?

Sir ROBERT.

For, without considering the private injury I may do to particular persons, this mischievous method must soon affect the whole mercantile world.

PILLAGE.

Why, what has that—

Sir ROBERT.

Mutual confidence is the very cement of commerce. That weaken'd, the whole structure must fall to the ground.

RESOURCE.

Hey!

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

From the practice of these infamous arts, as it is impossible they can be conceal'd, what suspicions, what jealousies must every man in trade entertain?

PILLAGE.

How I

Sir ROBERT.

What an injury besides, to those in my unhappy condition? the risks and losses unavoidably connected with commerce, procure the unsuccessful trader, generally the compassion, sometimes the friendly aid, of those of his order.

RESOURCE.

We know that well enough.

Sir ROBERT.

But when bankruptcy becomes a lucrative traffic, and men are found to fail with a view of making their fortunes, the unhappy and fraudulent will be confounded together, and punishment fall on his head, who has a title to pity.

PILLAGE.

The man's mad.

Sir ROBERT.

Perhaps I myself am a sacrifice to those very arts you have recommended so warmly. But there the mischief shall end. Men may suffer from my calamities, but they never shall by my crimes.

[Exit.

PIL-

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PILLAGE.

Did you ever meet with such a squeamish old fool? what could he mean by sending for us?

RESOURCE.

Who can tell? his head's turn'd, I suppose.

PILLAGE.

I thought we had him sure; but how nimbly he has slipp'd through our fingers!

RESOURCE.

Necessity will soon bring him back to our hook. He is shy for the present, but I warrant he will bite bye and bye.

PILLAGE.

Or we shall lose a capital prize.

RESOURCE.

Indeed, should his friends interpose, and matters be compounded without us.

PILLAGE.

That I have a sure way to prevent. Before an hour is past, I will tear such a rent in his robe, as I defy all the botchers in Europe to mend.

RESOURCE.

By what means?

PILLAGE.

I know he is in the receipt of some government money; I will take care to saddle him with an extent.

RESOURCE.

That will do.

H

PIL-

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PILLAGE.

I shall only just go and take out a commission against five macaronies, who are joint annuitants to a couple of Jews.

RESOURCE.

But how can you lug them into a statute? they are no dealers, you know.

PILLAGE.

No, dealers? yes, but they are.

RESOURCE.

Aye, of what kind?

PILLAGE.

Why, why they are dealers of cards. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Lady RISCOUNTER, and Sir JAMES BIDDULPH.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

If you will walk in, Sir James, Sir Robert is a little busy at present, but he will wait upon you directly.

Sir JAMES.

I have no call, Madam, that prevents my attending his leisure.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I fear the design of this visit, Sir James, is of a different nature from those we have lately receiv'd.

Sir JAMES.

I came, Madam, to offer my aid in detecting
and

and punishing an infamous calumny that has made its way to the publick, this morning.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

But reports of this kind, when despised and neglected, gradually die of themselves. It is a most unlucky affair, I confess.

Sir JAMES.

Unlucky! most false and atrocious: I hope, Madam, we shall be able to discover its author.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

As to that, it is scarce worth the enquiry.

Sir JAMES.

How, Madam!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

We have family reasons, Sir James, for wishing to draw a veil over—

Sir JAMES.

A veil! I am astonish'd, Lady Riscounter!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

The loss of your alliance, indeed, which now we dare neither expect, nor desire, has mortified us all not a little. If any other means could be found to form a connection between us, and a person of your merit and rank, there is nothing, I am sure, I should so ardently wish.

Sir JAMES.

Your ladyship is most exceedingly kind.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I hope the whole family, especially myself and

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daughter, are not, through the error of one, to be punished with the loss of your friendship.

Sir JAMES.

You do me infinite honour.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Indeed, my Lucy, upon this occasion, felt chiefly for you ; for tho' perhaps not so imposing and specious, as the girl whose lapse we lament, she has great goodness of heart, and a proper sense of your worth.

Sir JAMES.

Miss Lucy is most prodigiously—

Lady RISCOUNTER.

But Sir Robert's door opens, and as my presence may not be so proper upon this occasion, I take my leave, with the hopes of soon receiving a visit.

Sir JAMES.

I shall be happy, Madam, in seizing every occasion——your ladyship's——[*Exit Lady Riscounter.*] What can be the meaning of this ? She seems to confirm and credit the infamous story. Sir Robert, I suppose, will explain it.

Enter Sir ROBERT.

Sir ROBERT.

Sir James, I scarce know how to accost you ; but the confusion I feel at the unhappy cause of your visit.

Sir

Sir JAMES.

Indeed, Sir Robert, I own myself greatly perplex'd. I enter'd your house, full of the warmest resentment, and prepar'd to take every active part in my power; but your lady has dropp'd some hints, as if you wish'd to stifle all further enquiry. Pray, Sir Robert, be candid and open. This, Sir, I think, I have right to demand.

Sir ROBERT.

Doubtless. Nor do I wish to conceal: there is room for suspicion, I own; so far Lady Riscounter is right; but yet, Lydia——

Sir JAMES.

You have then seen her, Sir Robert——

Sir ROBERT.

Not ten minutes ago. Her surprise seem'd so sincere, and so artless, and——

Sir JAMES.

Without doubt——

Sir ROBERT.

And such strong marks of truth, both in her words, and her looks, that I confess——perhaps it was a fatherly weakness, I could not help giving credit to all that she said.

Sir JAMES.

You did her but justice, I am sure. I will pawn my life upon her honour and faith.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

But yet how to reconcile—for, Sir James, I will be impartial ; some accounts I have had—

Sir JAMES.

Time can only do that. Deep-laid designs are not discovered at once. If we can but get at the clue.—And what steps have you taken ? have you been, or sent to the printer's ?

Sir ROBERT.

No. I did think of going, but my lady persuaded me, that the step would be wrong.

Sir JAMES.

For which she had very good reasons, no doubt. Will you give me leave to accompany you thither ?

Sir ROBERT.

If you think it right.

Sir JAMES.

The very first thing you should do.

Sir ROBERT.

But should not we consult my lady about it ?

Sir JAMES.

The very last thing you should do.

Sir ROBERT.

And why so ?

Sir JAMES.

I must beg to conceal my reasons at present. I too, have my suspicions, Sir Robert.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

You have.

Sir JAMES.

Which I fancy you will soon find to be better founded than those of your family.

Sir ROBERT.

Not unlikely, Sir James.

Sir JAMES.

Come, Sir, my chariot is ready.

Sir ROBERT.

I attend you, Sir James.

[Exeunt.]

End of the SECOND ACT.

ACT.

A C T III.

Enter ROBIN, *and a Servant of Sir*
ROBERT.

ROBIN.

MY service to Miss Kitty, and I should be happy to have the honour of her ear a moment.

SERVANT.

Of her ear!

ROBIN.

These low fellows know nothing of the phrases in fashion, mere Vandals and Goats : but I must accommodate myself to their country. Will you tell Miss Kitty Combrush, that I should be glad to speak with her, when she is at leisure?

SERVANT.

Now I understand what you mean, that will I, Master Robin. *[Exit.*

ROBIN.

Damn'd provoking however, to have our ship sunk just as we were entering the port; this could not happen but by the contrivance of some of the crew : our captain too is most horribly hurt. This jade, I am convinc'd, is in the whole of the plot; but her own art, and the skill of her prompter, will make it difficult to get at the bottom.

Enter

Enter KITTY.

KITTY.

Bless me, Mr. Robin, after what has pass'd,
I little expected to see you again at our house.

ROBIN.

What injustice both to me and yourself!

KITTY.

How so, Mr. Robin?

ROBIN.

To your powerful attractions, and my proper
discernment.

KITTY.

I did not know I had any such things, Mr.
Robin.

ROBIN.

Infinite! but above all your penetration is the
most surprising to me. The conjuror in the Old
Bailey is a fool compar'd to Miss Kitty. You
are absolutely as knowing as one of the Civils,
if the latter part of your prediction was but as
fully accomplish'd.

KITTY.

What was that?

ROBIN.

Our cohabitation in the same house, notwith-
standing——

KITTY.

Time may bring that about, Mr. Robin.

I

ROBIN.

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R O B I N.

I don't comprehend how that can happen.

K I T T Y.

No! why, to make your master amends for the loss of Miss Lydia, suppose we were to give him Miss Lucy—

R O B I N.

D'ye call that making my master amends?

K I T T Y.

She is a good showy girl, and her fortune—

R O B I N.

Will be no temptation to him, I know he detests her.

K I T T Y.

Indeed!

R O B I N.

Cordially. So that if that be the only means, I have nothing left but despair. Oh! Miss Kitty, think what misery! that tender frame has a tear for pity, I'm sure; to be deprived of the warmest wish of my life, to be cut off for ever—

K I T T Y.

And do you really think as you say?

R O B I N.

Nothing but an amiable ignorance of your own charms, could for a moment induce you to doubt it.

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K I T T Y.

Suppose then, Mr. Robin, we were to live under our own roof, instead of that of another, don't you think it would be mending the matter?

R O B I N.

It would be Elysium, my angel. But how to get at the means?

K I T T Y.

If that is your objection, they may be easily found.

R O B I N.

Does my lovely Kitty think I can have any other?

K I T T Y.

Then since that is the case, Mr. Robin, it is but right I should explain to you, what I meant, by my riddle, this morning. But see that we are safe.

R O B I N.

Not a soul.

K I T T Y.

You must know, then, that this whole affair of Miss Lydia is my lady's contrivance.

R O B I N.

What, is that whole story a fiction?

K I T T Y.

A mere sham; nothing else; and to bring about Sir James's marriage with Lucy, her motive.

I 2

ROBIN.

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ROBIN.

I conceive.

KITTY.

Now, as the project would not do without my assistance, my lady gave me (here it is, stuck in my stays) a note for five hundred pounds, if the match is broke off; and a thousand, should Miss Lucy's take place.

ROBIN.

Hum—hum—hum—500—hum—hum—Rebecca Riscouter—it is just as you say.

KITTY.

Now, as matters stand, you see I am entitled to the first 500 directly, and, with your assistance, perhaps the other may follow.

ROBIN.

Not unlikely. But hold a little, dear Kitty, a little caution may not be amiss. This mistress of yours is a damn'd artful woman; she has trick'd others, and won't scruple cheating of you.

KITTY.

I don't understand you.

ROBIN.

It is not quite clear that this note is a good one.

KITTY.

How!

ROBIN.

I mean such a one as she will be obliged hereafter to pay.

KITTY.

KITTY.

Then the business shall be blown up in an instant.

ROBIN.

Too late. She will only laugh at you when her ends are obtain'd.

KITTY.

Then what steps can we take?

ROBIN.

There is an old master of mine, who lives in Brick-court in the Temple, as cunning a cur as ever hang'd an innocent man, or sav'd a rogue from the gallows. I'll run, and ask his opinion.

KITTY.

But won't that be betraying our secret?

ROBIN.

Counsellors, like confessors, are bound not to reveal their client's confession: besides, I can easily conceal the name of the party.

KITTY.

You will come immediately back?

ROBIN:

In an instant, unless I have your leave to go a step further.

KITTY.

Further!

ROBIN.

To Doctors Commons, for a little bit of parchment, that will soon unite us for ever.

KITTY.

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KITTY.

O law! you are in a vast prodigious great hurry; but, I think, Mr. Robin, you must do as you please.

ROBIN.

Thus let me acknowledge your kind condescension. For a moment then, my dear Kitty, adieu. [*Exit Kitty.*] So, now I have the means in my power to resetttle all our matters again.
[*Exit.*]

SCENE, *A Printer's.*

MARGIN *discovered with News-papers, Account-books, &c.*

MARGIN.

September the 9th. Sold twelve hundred and thirty. June the 20th. Two thousand and six. Good increase for the time, considering too that the winter has been pretty pacific: dabbled but little in treasons, and not remarkably scurrilous, unless, indeed, in a few personal cases. We must season higher to keep up the demand. Writers in Journals, like rope-dancers, to engage the public attention, must venture their necks every step that they take. The pleasure people feel, arises from the risques that we run—what's the matter?

Enter DINGEY.

DINGEY.

Mr. Hyson has left the Answer to his last letter on East India affairs.

MAR-

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MARGIN.

A lazy rascal, now his letter is forgot, he comes with an answer. Besides, the subject is stale: Return it again. Are all our people in waiting?

DINGEY.

The Attorney General to the paper, that answers the law cases, is not come yet.

MARGIN.

Oh! that's Ben Bond'em the Bailiff; prudently done, perhaps he has a writ against one of our authors—Bid them enter, and call over their names.

DINGEY.

Walk in, Gentlemen.

Enter PEPPER, PLAISTER, RUMOUR, FORGE-'EM, FIBBER, COMMA, CAUSTIC, O'FLAM, and others.

DINGEY.

Politicians, pro and con, Messieurs Pepper and Plaister.

PEPPER, PLAISTER.

Here.

MARGIN.

Pepper and Plaister, as both the houses are up, I shall adjourn your Political Warfare 'till their meeting again.

PEPPER.

Don't you think the public would bear one skirmish more before we close the campaign? I have a trimmer here in my hand.

PLAIS-

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PLAISTER.

To which I have as tart a retort.

MARGIN.

No, no; enough for the present. It is, Plaister, the proper timeing the subject, that gives success to our labours. The conductor of a Newspaper, like a good cook, should always serve up things in their season: who eats oysters in June? Plays and Parliament Houses are winter provisions.

PEPPER.

Then half the satire and salt will be lost: Besides, if the great man should happen to die, or go out.

MARGIN.

Pshaw! it will do as well for the great man that comes in. Political papers should bear vamping; like sermons, change but the application and text, and they will suit all persons and seasons.

PLAISTER.

True enough; but mean time, what can we turn to; for we shall be quite out of work?

MARGIN.

I warrant you, if you an't idle, there's business enough, the press teems with fresh publications—Histories, translations, voyages—

PEPPER.

That take up as much time to read as to make.

MAR-

MARGIN.

And what with letters from Paris or Spaw, inundations, elopements, dismal effects of thunder and lightning, remarkable causes at country assizes, and with changing the ministry now and then, you will have employment, enough for the Summer.

PLAISTER.

And so enter upon our old trade in the winter?

MARGIN.

Aye, or for variety, as it must be tiresome to take always one side; you, Pepper, may go over to administration, and Plaister will join opposition. The novelty may perhaps give fresh spirits to both.

PEPPER.

With all my heart. A bold writer has now no encouragement to sharpen his pen. I have known the day when there was no difficulty in getting a lodging in Newgate; but now, all I can say, won't procure me a warrant from a Westminster Justice.

MARGIN.

You say right, hard times, master Pepper, for persecution is the very life and soul of our trade; but don't despair, who knows how soon matters may mend? gentlemen, you may draw back.—Read the next.

DINGEY.

Criticks—Thomas Comma, and Christopher Caustic.

K

MARGIN

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MARGIN.

Where are they?

DINGEY.

As you could not find them in constant employment, they are engaged by the great, to do the articles in the Monthly Reviews.

MARGIN.

I thought they were done by Doctor Doubtful, the Deist.

DINGEY.

Formerly, but now he deals in manuscript sermons, writes religious essays for one of the Journals.

MARGIN.

Then he will soon sink. I foresaw what would come of his dramming. Go on.

DINGEY.

Collectors of paragraphs, Roger Rumour, and Phelim O'Flam.

RUMOUR, FLAM.

Here.

DING Y.

Fibber and Forge'em, composers and makers of ditto.

FIBB R, FORGE'EM.

Here.

MARGIN.

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MARGIN.

—Well, Rumour, what have you brought for the press?

RUMOUR.

I have been able to bring you no Positives.

MARGIN.

How! no Positives?

RUMOUR.

Not one. I have a Probability from the court end of the town; and two good Supposes out of the city.

MARGIN.

Hand them here—[reads.] “It is probable, “that if the King of Prussia should join the Czar- “ina, France will send a fleet into the Medi- “terranean, which, by giving umbrage to the “Maritime powers, will involve Spain by “its Family Compact. To which, if Austria “should refuse to accede, there may be a power- “ful diversion in Poland, made conjunctly by “Sweden and Denmark. And if Sardinia and “Sicily abide by the treaties, the German Prin- “ces can never be neuter; Italy will become the “seat of war, and all Europe soon set in a flame. —Vastly well, master Rumour, finely confused, and very alarming. Dingey, give him a shilling for this. I hope no other paper has got it?

RUMOUR.

Oh fie! did you ever know me guilty of such a —

MARGIN.

M A R G I N.

True, true, now let us see your Supposes—
 [Reads.] “It is supposed, if Alderman Mango
 “should surrender his gown, he will be succeed-
 “ed by Mr. Deputy Drylips, and if my Lord
 “Mayor should continue ill of the gout, it is
 “supposed the swan-hopping will cease for this
 “season.—That last suppose is fudged in, why,
 would you cram these upon me for a couple?

R U M O U R.

As distinct as can be.

M A R G I N.

Fye, remember our bargain. You agreed to
 do the court of Aldermen always for six pence.

R U M O U R.

What if a Common Hall should be called?

M A R G I N.

Oh! then you are to have three-pence a mo-
 tion, I know that, very well: I am sure no gen-
 tleman can accuse me of being sneaking. Din-
 gey, give him six pence for his supposes. Well,
 Phelim O’Flam, any deaths in your district?

O’F L A M.

The devil a one.

M A R G I N.

How! none?

O’F L A M.

O yes, a parcel of nobodies, that died worth
 nothing at all. Fellows that can’t pay for a fu-
 neral.

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neral. Upon my conscience, I can't think what becomes of the folks for my part, I believe, all the people who live in town, fall down dead in the country, and then too, since doctor Dispatch is gone to the Bath, patients linger so long.

MARGIN.

Indeed!

O'FLAM.

To be sure they do. Why, I waited at the Jolly Topers, a matter of two days and a half, for the last breath of Lady Dy Dropsy, for fear some other collector should catch it.

MARGIN.

A long time indeed.

O'FLAM.

Wasn't it? considering that she had two consultations besides, devilish tough. Mr. Margin, I shall quit the mortality walk, so provide yourself as soon as you can.

MARGIN.

I hope not.

O'FLAM.

Why, what will I do? I am sure the deaths wont keep me alive, you see I am already stripp'd to my shrowd; since November, the suicide season, I have not got salt to my porridge.

Enter Sir THOMAS TRADEWELL.

Sir THOMAS.

Is your name Matthew Margin?

MARGIN.

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MARGIN.

It is, and what then?

Sir THOMAS.

Then, pray what right had you to kill me in your last saturday's paper?

MARGIN.

Kill you!

Sir THOMAS.

Ay, Sir, here the article is; surely the law has some punishment for such insolent rascals as you.

MARGIN.

Punishment! and for what? but, after all, what injury have you sustain'd?

Sir THOMAS.

Infinite. All my agents are come post out of the country, my house is crouded with cousins, to be present at the opening my will, and there has been (as it is known she has a very good jointure) no less than three proposals of marriage already made to my relict.

MARGIN.

Let me look at the paragraph. [*Reads.*]
“ Last night, after eating a hearty supper, died
“ suddenly, with his mouth full of custard, Sir
“ Thomas Tradewell, knight, an amiable com-
“ panion, an affectionate relation, and a friend
“ to the poor.”—O’Flam, this is some blunder
of yours; for you see, here the gentleman is,
and alive.

O’FLAM.

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O'FLAM.

So he says, but the devil a one in this case would I believe but himself; because why, I was told it by Jeremy O'Turlough, his own body chairman, my dear: by the same token, I treated him with a pint of porter for the good news.

Sir THOMAS.

Vastly oblig'd to you, Mr. O'Flam, but I have nothing to do with this wretched fellow; it is you, Margin, shall answer for this.

MARGIN.

Why, Sir Thomas, it is impossible but now and then we must kill a man by mistake. And in some measure to make amends, you see what a good character the paper has given you.

Sir THOMAS.

Character!

MARGIN.

Aye, Sir, I can tell you I have had a crown for putting in many a worse.

O'FLAM.

Aye, Sir Thomas, consider of that, only think what a comfort it is, to live long enough after you are dead, to read such a good account of yourself in the papers.

Sir THOMAS.

Ha! ha! ha! what a ridiculous rascal! but I would advise you, gentlemen, not to take such liberties with me for the future. *[Exit.]*

O'FLAM.

O'FLAM.

Indeed and we won't; and I here give Mr. Margin my word, that you shan't die again, as long as you live, unless, indeed, we get it from under your own hand.

Enter Sir ROBERT RISCOUNTER,
and Sir JAMES BIDDULPH.

• Sir ROBERT.

Where is this Margin, this impudent, rascally Printer?

MARGIN.

Hey day! what's the matter now?

Sir JAMES.

Curb your choler, Sir Robert.

Sir ROBERT.

A pretty fellow, indeed, that every man's and woman's reputation must be subject to the power of his poisonous pen.

Sir JAMES.

A little patience, Sir Robert.

Sir ROBERT.

A land of liberty, this! I will maintain it, the tyranny exercised by that fellow, and those of his tribe is more despotic and galling, than the most absolute monarch's in Asia.

Sir JAMES.

Well, but—

Sir ROBERT.

Sir ROBERT.

Their thrones claim a right only over your persons and property, whilst this mungrel, squatting upon his joint stool, by a single line, proscribes and ruins your reputation at once.

Sir JAMES.

Sir Robert, let me crave—

Sir ROBERT.

And no situation is secure from their insults. I wonder every man is not afraid to peep into a paper, as it is more than probable that he may meet with a paragraph, that will make him unhappy for the rest of his life.

MARGIN.

But Gentlemen, what is all this business about?

Sir ROBERT.

About? zounds, Sir, what right had you to ruin my daughter?

MARGIN.

I, I know nothing of you nor your daughter.

Sir ROBERT.

Sir James Biddulph, you have it, produce the paper.

Sir JAMES.

There is no occasion for that, the affair is so recent, I dare say the Gentleman will remember the passage; this, Sir, is the Banker, the father, with whose daughter you was pleased to take these insolent freedoms, this morning.

L

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

And this, Sir, the amiable Baronet, from the West end of the Town.

MARGIN.

I recollect. Well, gentlemen, if you have brought any paragraphs to contradict the report, I am ready to insert them directly

Sir ROBERT.

And so, you rascal, you want us to furnish fresh food for your paper ;

MARGIN.

I do all I can, to keep my scales even ; the charge hangs heavy here ; on the other side, you may throw in the defence, then see which will weigh down the other.

Sir ROBERT.

Indeed, Sir James Biddulph, if he does that—

Sir JAMES.

That, can that paltry expedient atone for his crime ? will the snow that is sullied, recover its lustre ? so tender and delicate, Sir Robert, is the fame of a lady, that once tainted, it is tarnish'd for ever.

Sir ROBERT.

True enough.

MARGIN.

I could bear no ill-will to your daughter, as I know nothing about her.

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

Indeed, Sir James, I don't see how he could.

Sir JAMES.

Is his being the instrument of another man's malice, a sufficient excuse?

Sir ROBERT.

So far from it, that it enhances the guilt. Zounds, Sir James, you are a Parliament Man, why don't you put an end to this practice?

MARGIN.

Ay, let them attack the press, if——

Sir ROBERT.

Have a care of that, no no, that must not be done.

Sir JAMES.

No man, Sir Robert, honours that sacred shield of freedom more than myself.

Sir ROBERT.

I dare say.

Sir JAMES.

But I would not have it serve to shelter these pests, who point their poison'd arrows against the peace of mankind.

Sir ROBERT.

By no means in the world. Let them be dragg'd from behind it directly.

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MARGIN.

Ay, do destroy the watchful dogs that guard
and cover your flocks.

Sir JAMES.

You guard, you cover!

MARGIN.

Ay, who but us alarms the nation when bad
designs are on foot?

Sir ROBERT.

In that respect, they are very useful no doubt.

Sir JAMES.

Are they therefore entitled to give the alarm,
when no such design is intended?

Sir ROBERT.

By no means. A pack of factious, infamous
scoundrels.

MARGIN.

It is we that supply the defects of the laws.

Sir JAMES.

You!

MARGIN.

By stigmatizing those offenders that they can-
not reach.

Sir ROBERT.

That, indeed serves to keep the guilty in awe.

Sir

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Sir JAMES.

And is a pretence for making the innoeent the
buts of their malice.

Sir ROBERT.

True, true, all is fish that comes to their
nets.

Sir JAMES.

Besides, their slander is scattered so generally,
and with so little discretion, that the deformity
of vice is destroyed.

Sir ROBERT.

True.

Sir JAMES.

Bad men are made worse, by becoming totally
callous, and even the good rendered careless, to
that source of patriotism, that pride of virtue,
the public opinion.

Sir ROBERT.

And they are much in the right on't.

MARGIN.

What, you are a courtier, I reckon, no won-
der you with the press was demolished.

Sir JAMES.

If ever that happens, to such miscreants as you
'twill be owing; nor will it surprize me, if all
orders concur to give up a great public benefit,
for the sake and security of private honour and
peace.

Sir

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Sir ROBERT.

Nor me either.

MARGIN.

You would consent then to surrender the press?

Sir ROBERT.

I would sooner consent to be hang'd.

Sir JAMES.

'And its unbounded licence continue?

Sir ROBERT.

I would much rather see it on fire.

MARGIN.

With respect to its general use——

Sir ROBERT.

Not the smallest doubt can be made.

Sir JAMES.

But, Sir Robert, then the abuse——

Sir ROBERT.

Is what no mortal can bear.

MARGIN.

But, Sir Robert, you would but just now——

Sir ROBERT.

I confess it, I did.

Sir JAMES.

'Ay, but that was, Sir Robert, because.

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

For no other reason in life.

MARGIN.

My observation you allowed to be—

Sir ROBERT.

Pointed.

Sir JAMES.

And my reply—

Sir ROBERT.

Conclusive as could be.

MARGIN.

But then—

Sir ROBERT.

To be sure.

Sir JAMES.

Because why—

Sir ROBERT.

You are quite in the right.

O'FLAM.

Upon my soul, they have got the old gentleman into such puzzleation, that I don't believe he knows what he wishes himself. Stand by and let me clear up this matter a little. Hearkee, Mr. Sir Robert, if I understand your meaning at all, it is, that provided people could be prevented from publishing, you are willing the press should be free.

Sir ROBERT.

That was my meaning no doubt.

O'FLAM.

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O'FLAM.

Upon my conscience, and nothing but reason. There, I believe, we are all of us agreed. How seldom would people differ, if once we could get them to be all of a mind. And now this difference is whole and compos'd, let me try if I can't make up the other. I understand, here old gentleman, you have had a daughter abused.

Sir ROBERT.

Most foully.

O'FLAM.

And you want to know who was the author?

Sir ROBERT.

That was my sole business here.

O'FLAM.

Then why could not you say so at first, without all this bothering and bawling. Well, master Margin, come give the old buck satisfaction.

MARGIN.

It was anonymous.

O'FLAM.

Upon my soul, and I thought so. This is the most damnedst, impudent son of a bitch, he had like to have brought me into three or four scrapes, by fathering his lies upon me.

Sir JAMES.

Will you give us leave to look at the hand?

MARGIN.

Truly, this is the paper.

Sir

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Sir JAMES.

Sir Robert, do you recollect to have seen this writing before?

Sir ROBERT.

It is James's, I know it as well as my own: here are his B—s, his G—s, and his T—s.

Sir JAMES.

So I guess'd. Will you trust the paper with us?

Sir ROBERT.

Let him get it again, if he can.—Sir James, I shall expect you at home. *[Exit.]*

MARGIN.

I hope no bad use will be made on't.

Sir JAMES.

The worst use has already been made on't; but at parting, Mr. Margin, let me give you a piece of advice. Take care how you provoke the publick patience too far. You have set the laws at defiance, and long reign'd uncontrouled, I confess, but don't wonder if the subjects of your slander forget there are laws in their turn, and valuing an honest name more than their lives, should expose their lives to revenge it.

[Exit.]

O'FLAM.

Upon my soul, Mr. Margin, very wholesome advice, and will do you much good if you take it; but, above all, rid your hands of James Anonymous as soon as you can, you know it

M

was

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was he got you that beating.—That fellow has brought you into more scrapes than all your authors together.

Enter Lady RISCOUNTER, LUCY,
and KITTY.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Sir James Biddulph is gone?

KITTY.

Yes, Madam, and with him my master.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Sir Robert! to what place, can you guess?

KITTY.

I should think, by what I overheard, to the printer's.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

To the printer's! of what use can that be?

KITTY.

I can't say; but your ladyship, I hope, will excuse me.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Excuse you, why child, what's the matter?

KITTY.

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KITTY.

I have heard some whispering among the clerks, as if things were not quite so well with my master.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

What, some little disappointments in trade?

KITTY.

Much worse, I am afraid, I don't know what it means; but they say an extent is brought into the house.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

With all my heart; let what will happen, it can be of little importance to me.

LUCY.

No, Madam!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

My child, you can't suppose, but upon my marriage, at all events, to secure a proper provision.

LUCY.

Indeed! can that be done?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

A common caution, my dear, don't you see Mrs. Paduasoy rides in her coach, whilst half her husband's creditors are in gaol.

LUCY.

Is that the case?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

If wives were to have any thing to do with
M 2 those

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those kind of creatures, who d'ye think would marry with people in business? and now I think on't, it will be so much the better; for the father's failure must in some measure fall on the daughter.

LUCY.

True; but your ladyship saw Sir James Bid-
dolph.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

For a moment only, my dear.

LUCY.

Well, Madam, and——

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I only just threw out a hint, to be more explicit now, would make him suspicious, we must give him time to digest his disappointment.

KITTY.

As I live, Miss Lydia is coming.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Lydia!

Enter LYDIA.

LYDIA.

I beg your ladyship's pardon, for intruding without your permission; but, my unfortunate situation will, I hope, plead my excuse: I come, Madam, to beg your protection.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Mine, child?

LYDIA.

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LYDIA.

Your assistance, in detecting the authors of this horrid design.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

That, child, is properly your father's concern.

LYDIA.

True, Madam; but the relation your ladyship bears to his family might, I hope, induce you to do me this justice.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Justice, Lydia, as it is my duty, I shall ever be ready to give my advice.

LYDIA.

That, Madam, is all that I want.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

As this affair has made such a noise, there remains but one step to be taken.

LYDIA.

Which is——

Lady RISCOUNTER.

A marriage with James.

LYDIA.

With James! and so sanctify the scandalous story.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

It may be alledged by the family, that the ceremony had pass'd before the detection.

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LYDIA.

Detection! I hope your ladyship does not suppose there is the smallest foundation?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

That I shall not pretend to determine. But, at all events, you are in the right to deny it.

LYDIA.

Your ladyship's indifference shocks me more than the——Your daughter, Lucy, will do me justice I am sure, she has been privy to every—

LUCY.

Me, Miss? I beg pardon for that: how should I know your Intrigues? I beg you will not involve me in your guilt.

LYDIA.

Nay, then it is in vain to struggle, I see; my ruin is resolv'd.

Enter Sir ROBERT.

Sir ROBERT.

Where is Lady Riscounter? well, my dear, we have got to the bottom of this infernal business at last—here, here it is, in the rascal's own hand.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Sir Robert!

Sir ROBERT.

Why, the paragraph was sent to the printer's by James.

Lady

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Well ?

Sir ROBERT.

So that you see proves the forgery plain.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Now I think it makes the fact more apparent.

Sir ROBERT.

How ?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

By the confession of one of the parties.

Sir ROBERT.

That I confess, as it was voluntary.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Makes it amount to a positive proof.

Sir ROBERT.

It looks very suspicious indeed.

Enter Sir JAMES BIDDULPH.

Sir ROBERT.

Here my lady, Sir James, thinks, that instead of clearing, this paper only serves to convince her.

Sir JAMES.

Is that your ladyship's judgment ?

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Quite to a demonstration, Sir James.

Sir

Sir JAMES.

But his policy.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Obvious enough; to force the family to solicit his marrying the girl, as a favour.

Sir JAMES.

That, indeed!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

With the hopes, perhaps, of obtaining some additional advantage.

Sir ROBERT.

In return, no doubt, for his great condescension. An infamous——

Sir JAMES.

I should have thought the young lady's private fortune, and person, especially to one of his rank, a very sufficient inducement. But this Mr. James is an absolute Machiavel.

Sir ROBERT.

As fly a dog as ever existed.

Sir JAMES.

But could not we see him, Sir Robert?

Sir ROBERT.

The rascal is run off.

Sir JAMES.

Indeed!

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

We have search'd for him all the town over.

Sir JAMES.

That is unlucky, as I should have been glad to have ask'd him a question. I believe it is unnecessary to apologize to the family, for any part I take in this business.

Sir ROBERT.

We are all highly obliged.

Sir JAMES.

But I have received a letter, the contents of which astonish me much.

Sir ROBERT.

About the matter in hand?

Sir JAMES.

Indeed the writer is but a dependant of mine, but his veracity is out of the question, the facts must speak for themselves. Mrs. Kitty, you will be kind enough to stay here for a moment.

KITTY.

What can be the meaning of this?

Sir JAMES.

If the charge is false, I am sure, Lady Riscounter will pardon me for the sake of the motive. If true, she, in her turn, will stand in want of all our forgiveness.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Me! who will dare to impeach my conduct, Sir James?

N

Sir

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Sir JAMES.

Your ladyship's patience, a moment. This paper, Sir Robert, charges Lady Riscounter with being the sole contriver of this villainous project.

Sir ROBERT.

How!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Me!

Sir JAMES.

With a view of dissolving the contract between your fair daughter and me.

Sir ROBERT.

To what purpose? what end?

Sir JAMES.

One that does me too much honour, I own, the bringing about a union between Miss Lucy and me.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

A most probable story, indeed: your informer's name, if you please.

Sir JAMES.

A servant who has oft attended me here.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

'And he receiv'd it from——

Sir JAMES.

One of your ladyship's women; there she stands, I believe.

LYDIA

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LYDIA:

Is it possible that you, Kitty—

Sir ROBERT.

Patience, Lydia, a moment.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

And you think this paltry plot, obviously fram'd by a couple of servants, (unless you condescend to be the contriver yourself) will justify you in bringing this charge against a person of my rank and condition.

Sir ROBERT.

Fie, fie, Sir James, that is too presumptuous indeed.

Sir JAMES.

Why, I should not have ventur'd, I believe, if I had not to produce a more unexceptionable witness than these.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Name the person directly.

Sir JAMES.

Lady Riscounter herself.

Sir ROBERT.

What?

Sir JAMES.

There is a little billet contain'd in this letter, where your ladyship promises a capital sum, when some certain services are fully perform'd.

Sir ROBERT.

By your leave, Sir James, let me look. Oh,
clear,

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clear, clear, it is her hand, there is no denying of this.

Sir JAMES.

I fancy Mrs. Kitty will own it. Otherwise my servant is below to confront her.

Sir ROBERT.

Well, what reply do you make to all this?

KITTY.

I beg pardon, Sir, of my mistress, and you.

Sir ROBERT.

Pardon.

KITTY.

I own the accusation is just, though I little thought Mr. Robin would betray me.

Sir ROBERT.

Do you? and what an ungrateful wretch must you be? you have been but a poor instrument only. But is it possible you, Lady Riscounter, could so entirely forget what you owe to me, and your——

Lady RISCOUNTER.

I see, Sir Robert, you are so far prepossess'd, that all I can say——

Sir ROBERT.

Say, Madam, what can be said for such——

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Nay, Sir, I am not going to make a formal defence, it is not worth my while, nor would you have leisure to hear it: if you will walk down

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down, you will find another sort of business, that demands your attention.

Sir ROBERT.

The house fill'd with a new kind of customers.

LYDIA, Sir ROBERT, Sir JAMES.

How!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Only an extent, to seize on all his effects.

LYDIA, Sir ROBERT, Sir JAMES.

Is it possible!

Lady RISCOUNTER.

The world will therefore see how ill I am treated—but don't imagine, Sir Robert, that the provision I derive from her father, shall be lavished to lessen your debts, or be employ'd in support of their author.

LUCY.

Your ladyship will have more prudence, no doubt.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

No, child, we will quit this mansion directly, and leave him for consolation to the care of his daughter.

LYDIA.

A more precious trust, I could never receive. Your treachery to me, Madam, I could both despise and forgive: but your insolent triumph, at the distress of an unfortunate husband, gives you

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you a pre-eminence above the worst of your sex. If, Sir, what you are pleased to call mine, can either reinstate, or assist you, I beg it may be all employ'd in the service.

Sir ROBERT.

Nay, pr'ythee, Lydia—

LYDIA.

You see, Sir James Biddulph; there are new obstacles oppos'd to your purpose.

Sir JAMES.

If you mean those her ladyship has been pleas'd to produce, they add only an additional strength to my wishes. The piety with which this great, this first duty is discharg'd, must accompany every other relation in life. I applaud, and shall be happy to join in your purpose.

Lady RISCOUNTER.

Come, Lucy, let us leave these romantick creatures together, they are only fit for each other; when your effects are convey'd to proper trustees, I shall take care to put in my claim.

[Exeunt Lady Riscounter and Lucy.]

Sir ROBERT.

Unfeeling, insolent woman; but thy goodness, Lydia, supplies every loss, nor will my creditors, when they find I never deceiv'd them, take advantage of thy filial affection.

Enter a CLERK.

What now?

CLERK.

CLERK.

The Dutch mail is arrived.

Sir ROBERT.

Any private letters from Holland?

CLERK.

Your correspondents, Sir, have honour'd your bills.

Sir ROBERT.

And discharg'd them?

CLERK.

Every one.

Sir ROBERT.

And the report of their failing——

CLERK.

Was without the smallest foundation.

Sir ROBERT.

Heaven be prais'd; now, Lydia, thy father can look again with confidence in the face of his friends.

LYDIA.

A more real transport could never have reach'd me!

Sir ROBERT.

I know it, Lydia, I know it. This gentleman will both thank and reward you.

CLERK.

Sir, I would beg just to——

Sir

Sir ROBERT.

I guess what you mean; some inquisitive persons below; they shall be satisfied soon. I will attend them directly. *[Exit Clerk.]*

Sir JAMES.

Give me leave to join in the general joy. But what, Sir Robert, shall we do with this paper? I fancy my man is in waiting; Robin.

Enter ROBIN.

ROBIN.

Sir.

Sir JAMES.

You have been of singular service to-day, which I shall take good care to acknowledge. The worth of this note, as the conditions have fail'd—

ROBIN.

Like many more of his kindred, is reduc'd to waste paper; your honour; but as this happy turn has been chiefly owing to Kitty, I hope she will be restor'd to favour again.

Sir JAMES.

But consider, Robin, that was not her intention.

ROBIN.

But recollect, Sir, the temptation—five hundred pounds—

Sir ROBERT:

And then the treachery—But as many of her superiors,

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superiors, tho' perhaps not her betters, are daily detected in doing things more criminal for less consideration, it is some excuse, I confess. But what says my Lydia?

LYDIA.

I shall be directed by you.

Sir ROBERT.

And now, my children, nothing remains but the last act, to establish your union, and if (as I am resolved to disengage myself from that bad woman, and the cares of this world) you will suffer me to be a partaker of this domestic felicity——

Sir JAMES, LYDIA.

You cannot in any thing oblige us so much.

Sir ROBERT.

That is all I have to ask of you, or the world.

[*Exeunt.*]

F I N I S.

THE BANKRUPT

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[Exit]

FINIS

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